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ABSTRACT

Presenting many listening activities, this paper discusses reading and listening development in elementary school. It lists five pointers to stress in developing pupils who listen well and gives a set of criteria to provide a framework to use in evaluating pupil achievement in listening. The paper lists six items teacher assistants should listen for when participating in a discussion with a pupil. It then offers five pointers each to emphasize in writing questionnaires, making introductions, and participating in a dramatic activity. The paper considers how answering questions raised by others leads to critical thinking and critical listening. It outlines the three evolutionary layers into which the brain is divided. Discussing listening to lectures and explanations, listening to musical recordings, and responding to sounds in the environment, the paper presents a list of five recommendations for each area. It recommends involving pupils in curriculum development. The paper describes four classroom learning centers that may assist pupils to develop independent, responsible behavior. (SC)

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Listening and Reading in the Elementary School.

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LISTENING AND READING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Listening and speaking are two vital skills that are interrelated. When there is a speaker, there is a listener, unless one talks to the self. Then too, listening is directly related to reading. When content is read orally, generally there is/are listeners. Speaking is involved when oral reading is emphasized. What is listened to and what is spoken can be written down as print discourse. The print discourse can be read. It truly is difficult to separate listening, speaking, reading, and writing. An integrated language arts curriculum should then certainly be in evidence. The logic of an integrated language arts curriculum may be taken one step further in that the content may deal with literature, social studies or social sciences, mathematics, science, art, music, and physical education. I think it wise to mention these different curriculum areas due to the present day stress placed upon multiple intelligences, meaning that individuals may be gifted in one or more of these academic or curriculum areas. Thus, pupils may show what has been learned in more ways than verbal intelligences only or largely, such as reading and test taking with paper/pencil tests. A pupil then may reveal what has been learned through art or music, for example. It might present problems if a pupil, for example, has physical education intelligence to show what has been learned in science. However, there are psychomotor objectives within the science areas of the curriculum. Thus a pupil or a committee may set up a science experiment that relates directly to the ongoing science lesson or unit of study (Ediger, 1997).

Listening and the Language Arts

As infants, the first known vocabulary in the language arts that is developed is listening. We learn the native language first because oral discourse is in that language involving parents, siblings, and significant others. Infants imitate what is said by others in the environment. Models are presented by adults and children that present examples for the infant to emulate. If standard English is spoken in the home, the chances are the infant will also develop in the direction of speaking standard English. One can communicate effectively in either standard or nonstandard English. However, society prizes more highly the standard English model. I believe all languages spoken need to be respected as well as accept each person as a human being having much worth.

My background, as a child, emphasized learning to speak English on the first grade level. Low German was always spoken in the home setting whereas the language of the church was High German. I do not agree with selected states in the nation that say or want to make a law

that, "English is the language only." It is also indeed difficult to say what that statement means.

What should pupils listen for? This question indicates a need for a statement of objectives that spell out what pupils are to achieve in the listening arena. I will indicate which areas of listening should receive priority. Although, there will be some differences of opinion here. I believe that teachers need to give adequate emphasis to pupils participating in conversation as a listening activity. Conversing is probably the most common kind of listening activity experienced by individuals. I feel that pupils should practice conversing with each other in the school lunch room, before and after the school day begins, as well as time allotment during the regular school day. Social development is a part of being able to converse well. There are numerous people who have stated that they wish they were better conversationalists. There is a social need to be a part of a group and participate actively therein. Being proficient in conversation and doing well socially seemingly are interrelated. The teacher should present a model to pupils in being one who converses well with others.

What are selected additional pointers to stress in developing pupils who listen well in the use of conversation?

1. the speaker should have something interesting to say to capture the attention of others who are listeners.
2. quality sequence in ideas expressed will assist pupils to become better listeners.
3. distractions should be avoided.
4. a determination to be a good listener can have many merits in that it is personally goal centered.
5. definite goals in the curriculum need to stress positive listening.

The teacher needs to evaluate pupil achievement in listening as well as the pupil engaging in self appraisal. The following set of criteria may provide a framework for determining learner progress in listening:

I am able to

1. React to details
2. Recall and respond to the content of a message
3. Respond to the sequence and organization of a message
4. Follow a set of oral directions
5. Identify and relate the topic, main ideas, and supporting details of a message
6. Take notes on a message
7. Summarize a message
8. Take action based on a message
9. Inter relationships among ideas; specifically:
    a. Contrast and compare points
    b. Categorize ideas
    c. Generalize

d. Propose reasons and causes
e. Predict outcomes
f. Apply ideas

10. Distinguish fact from opinion
11. Infer a speaker's point of view and feelings
12. Infer meaning from the nonverbal and vocal expressions a speaker uses
13. Formulate opinions and judgments; support judgments with reasons
14. Evaluate stories read
15. Weigh the quality of an oral message or performance
16. Identify some messages as propaganda and evaluate these as harmful or harmless
17. Take pleasure in the content of stories, poems, and dramatizations when heard
18. Enjoy the sounds of language
19. Enjoy the moods expressed and the pictures conjured up through striking language use (Hennings, 1994).

Listening and reading are very closely related to each other. Pupils need to become good listeners so that they achieve an adequate knowledge base for background information in reading. Hearing words and sounds assists pupils to become more sensitive to phonics and sound/symbol relationships. Being a good listener also helps pupils to notice sequence in ideas expressed. In reading content, there is a selected order or sequence of ideas presented.

Participating in a Discussion

There are numerous times when an individual needs to participate in a discussion. I believe that many feel lost during the discussion when they missed out on key ideas being emphasized. The pupil with teacher guidance needs to become determined to comprehend well during a discussion. Practicing quality listening habits is necessary in life within school and in society. There is much information conveyed orally and individuals need to comprehend that which is in the offing. I suggest that pupils with teacher assistance pay attention to the following during a discussion:

1. What is the communicator attempting to present to others?
2. Which main idea or generalization is being conveyed?
3. Are the oral contents clearly presented so that effective listening is possible?
4. Which concepts and facts are relevant in the communication process?
5. Is there something in the environment that is distracting?

6. What needs to be done to communicate more effectively with others in a discussion?

The above named questions need to be discussed and solutions found so that information is effectively conveyed to others. Discussion is a common way for teachers to use as a learning activity in evaluating comprehension levels on the part of pupils from the ongoing reading selection. Pupils need to analyze and synthesize subject matter read as well as apply what has been learned in problem solving experiences.

Interviewing Others

The interview process is used rather frequently in society to obtain information for a survey as well as to ascertain qualities of a person being interviewed for a job or position. Interviews may be very positive in realizing these two goals, if well planned. Interviewing may flop, too, if the interviewer comes to the interview without any effort put forth in planning. The person doing the interviewing needs to have a sequential outline of salient ideas to cover during the interview. These ideas must be kept well in mind so that efficiency is involved in securing necessary information. The information may be used in problem solving or obtained for interest reasons. The interviewer should stay on the topic and not digress from it, unless a new angle, not previously thought of, enters in to the significance of what is being interviewed. Eye contact is important in most interviews, unless the involved culture does not stress that as being positive, such as The Old Order Amish. Good, careful listening to what the interviewee says saves time and energy in an interview. Less repetition is then in evidence. Training to be a good listener certainly is time and effort well spent. Becoming a quality listener can be learned and negative behaviors modified or eliminated.

A variation of the face to face interview is to survey individuals in gathering data in answer to a problem or question. The survey letter, after careful writing and developing, may be sent out to constituents. A random sample of respondents is necessary so that facets of objectivity are in evidence. Respondents to the mailed questionnaire may rate each response on a five point scale. Thus, the following may be rated on a five point scale: I am for the $500,000 bond levy to finance remodeling the city swimming pool. Each item on the questionnaire needs to be clearly written and may be tried out in a pilot study. The results of the survey may even be mailed to the local newspaper for publishing. If the local newspaper is published once a week or is published daily in a small city, the chances are better that the results will be published, as compared to a large city newspaper. The results might also be printed in the local school or classroom paper. If appropriate, there may be a follow up in which the same/similar questions are asked in a face to

face situation. This is done to determine if consistency of results is in evidence from the written to the oral responses of the interviewee.

The pupils in a class setting may study the development of questionnaires from a manual. Careful reading of content is then necessary (Ediger, 1988). Pointers to emphasize in writing questionnaires are the following:

1. write clearly stated items in the questionnaire that do not permit misinterpretation.
2. try the questionnaire out in a pilot study to notice its quality before using it to gather information from respondents.
3. do not duplicate items unless the interviewer wishes to notice consistency of responses from different interviewees.
4. speak clearly when conducting an oral interview.
5. show respect and concern for those being interviewed.

Making Introductions

In school and in society, we are asked to introduce ourselves to others or introduce a friend or guest to others. There are selected pointers that may be very helpful in the making of introductions. The older person's name should be mentioned first when making introductions. A few interesting comments about those being introduced should be made pertaining to their interests or hobbies that each person has. Thus, if John is being introduced to three friends, a little bit of interesting positive information about John can start the ball rolling in conversation. A pleasant voice needs to be used with appropriate voice inflection. The following guidelines may provide additional assistance in the making of introductions:

1. have good eye contact in the introductory process.
2. speak loud enough so all can hear clearly what is being said, but not too loudly whereby the speaking voice become abrasive.
3. have something interesting to say about those being introduced so that active involvement in conversation may follow.
4. make introductions in a friendly manner with genuine feelings of getting those involved who are in the introductory process.
5. practice the art frequently of making introductions.

Participating in a Dramatic Activity

With the spoken voice in creative and formal dramatics, observers may purposefully develop their listening skills. Within the creative dramatics presentation, speaking parts are not written down but are developed as the need arises. Pupils need to know the story well which they are dramatizing. With this knowledge, careful planning needs to be done as to who will obtain which speaking part. Cooperative planning is

necessary here, with teacher guidance. Pupils need to select roles which they feel comfortably with. Once, they are comfortable in playing one or more roles in creative dramatics, pupils might then choose to play a less familiar role. It is good for pupils to become versatile and put themselves into the shoes of others. There are excellent opportunities to do this, be it in creative or formal dramatics.

Creative dramatics involves observers paying careful attention to what an involved person has said creatively within the presentation. Learners in the presentation do need to respond to each other without a prepared script. Quick thinking and recall of content from the story being dramatized are needed in order that there is quality sequence in the creative dramatics presentation. Pupils need to have opportunities to practice the creative dramatics presentation prior to presenting it to others. Learners should develop feelings of confidence and poise in the ongoing activity. A positive self concept is needed in order that the pupil may achieve more optimally in creative dramatics. Pupils in the creative dramatics presentation, as well as those listening as spectators, need to comprehend as well as possible with opportunities to listen in a more optimal manner.

In formal dramatics, the play parts are written down by a committee of pupils. These pupils have read the contents of the story carefully and are ready to write the different roles and play parts for a formal dramatization. Stories from a library book or basal reader might well provide the necessary content in writing these play parts.

Pointers to emphasize here for good listening to accrue are the following:

1. teach pupils to predict what will occur next in sequence in the dramatization activity. Being able to make these predictions assists pupils to become better listeners and readers.

2. have listeners to the dramatization experience evaluate the presentation. To do this requires careful and accurate listening. Criteria may be developed so that listeners have standards to go by for the evaluation process.

3. write a different set of statements to change the setting, characterization, and/or plot. To do this, higher levels of cognition are needed by pupils and this requires quality listening.

4. ask for volunteers to take the contents from listening to the formal dramatization and change it to a creative dramatics endeavor.

5. challenge pupils to do a formal dramatization, after listening to a creative dramatics experience. The best of listening is involved here in order that the creative dramatics activity might be used to write play parts for the formal dramatization.

Answering Questions Raised by Others

In question and answer sessions, pupils have ample opportunities to listen carefully to questions raised so that appropriate answers may be given. Too frequently, the pupil has not listened to the questions adequately, relating in incomplete responses. Pupils in the discussion also need to think carefully and accurately when presenting questions. Good listening habits need to be developed. Careful listening is learned behavior. To be sure, adequate background information is necessary so that the responder may relate the previous learnings acquired with those relating you the questions raised. If possible, the responder may write down on a pad the question(s) raised. As one responds, it might be relatively easy to forget the focal point of the question unless this has been written down. Pupils in the classroom setting need to be able to make related comments on information provided by the responder. Thus, there are challenges to what has been said and answered. These sessions need to be lively and provide for broad participation by the presenter(s). Respect for the thinking of others is a necessity. Pupils do not respond unless they feel the freedom to do so. Mc Lean's triune theory (cited in Nummels, Caine, and Caine, 1991) has developed important ideas pertaining to to that which promotes creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking. Thus, the brain divides into three evolutionary layers:

1. the R-complex , or reptilian part, locate in the brain stem, is concerned with survival needs and body maintenance. This accounts for behaviors such as territoriality, development of hierarchies, preening and nesting, mating rites, and flocking tendencies. The R-complex responses are automatic, ritualistic, and formal. These responses are typical when resistance to change is in evidence.

2.. The limbic system monitors emotions and organizes new information in the local memory system. It is located in the center of the brain, and mediates between the R-complex and the neocortex. It can inhibit or redirect the r-complex; however, under stress, cortisol inhibits this area and the cortex, and the ability to think or respond imaginatively. Under conditions of challenge, adrenalin and noradrenalin strengthens this area's functions, if there are breaks between the challenges.

3. The neocortex, the newer area comprises five/sixths of the total brain and is believed to be the site of higher levels of thought, creativity, and adaptive problem solving. Under stress or threat, it "shuts down" and the organism "down shifts" to the reptilian complex.

All though the above model cannot be proven, there are inherent interesting statements therein that deserve attention and thought. To be sure, individuals do tend to become protective when their security is challenged, such as in curriculum revision endeavors. When rapid

changes are being announced in hierarchical form, teachers in a school system tend to hold on to the ideas and skills of the past due to threats felt and observed. The traditional feels secure and newness in innovations makes for feelings of insecurity. Changes then are coming too rapidly and, perhaps, are not understood well. Teachers have not had a chance to ponder and reflect over the new ideas being presented. With these areas of rapid misunderstood changes coming about, teachers may do less creative and critical thinking, as well as problem solving. Their feelings and emotions are not there to achieve higher levels of objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation techniques. A lower energy level is there for the making of changes in an innovative curriculum.

Higher levels of cognition make for more complex levels of thinking on the part of individuals participating in question and answer sessions. A nonthreatning environment needs to be in the offing so that pupils may engage in creative and critical thinking as well as problem solving.

Listening To Lectures and Explanations

There are times when pupils listen to short lectures or explanations. There is a one way street of communication here in that the message goes from the speaker to the receiver. Pupils need to listen to the sequence of ideas expressed to understand the spoken content. Should there be a time for questions of the lecturer or explainer, pupils need to synthesize ideas and perceive gaps in information. The questions raised reveal the degree that the spoken content was meaningfully received. Listeners may also wish to have selected ideas clarified as presented by the speaker. Further criteria to indicate careful listening by pupils are the following:

1. attention paid by pupils to the oral presentation of the speaker.
2. concentration by learners to the contents of the ensuing message.
3. quality of questions raised by pupils of the speaker.
4. acquired subject matter by pupils from the speaker's purposes.
5. use made of the acquired information by pupils individually or in committees.

As much as possible, pupils should be guided to make use of what has been listened to. In this way, pupils will feel a need to listen more carefully so that they may apply in new situations that which had been learned previously.

Listening to Musical Recordings

The teacher may play musical recordings to pupils relating directly to ongoing lessons and units of study. The recordings need to be clear and well developed. An appropriate volume must be in evidence for pupils to benefit fully from the musical recording. Readiness for listening needs to be developed. Thus, a repertoire for listening to and enjoying quality musical recordings needs to be in the offing. Richness of experiences and variety of endeavors should be emphasized in unit planning. There are pupils whose strengths lie in listening to and enjoying music. Dr. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1993) stresses musical intelligence as one of nine kinds of intelligences. In addition to listening to and enjoying music, pupils who excel in this area need to have opportunities to indicate what has been learned through musical intelligence. Pupils gifted in music might even compose musical scores, when readiness permits. Learning then should not consist of verbal content, such as reading and test taking alone, but should stress other intelligences which pupils possess.

Pupils then need to

1. be assisted to learn from music as a goal centered activity.
2. be guided in developing interest, purpose, and meaning in music as it related to diverse curriculum areas.
3. be a consumer of music in its diverse manifestations as well as a producer when abilities and interests permit.
4. be an evaluator of quality music, in terms of desired criteria.
5. be one who desires to learn more in the field of music in terms of meeting viable objectives of instruction.

Responding to Sounds in the Environment

The environment may produce a a variety of sounds from which pupils may make identifications as to the cause(s). Here, the teacher may have pupils put their heads face down, in a comfortable position, on their desks, to identify unseen sounds. These sounds may include the teacher pouring water into a tumbler for pupil identification. Other sounds made by the teacher include tapping the foot on the floor, rubbing two pieces of sandpaper or other materials, whispering quietly, and hitting two objects together such as wood. Pupils then need to identify the source of these sounds. Hopefully, pupils will transfer these learnings to becoming careful listeners to sounds in the environment. Teachers have taken their pupils out to the school grounds to notice different sounds made in nature such as a bird singing, a rabbit scurrying away, leaves rustling in the breeze, and pellets of snow hitting the ground.

Safety factors might also be involved in guiding pupils to become better listeners in the environment, such as sounds made by cars being driven nearby at a rather rapid rate of speed or industrial equipment being operated in a housing area.

The following pointers are good to stress in listening as an objective in the curriculum:

1. make good listening an important goal in reading and in any curriculum area.
2. integrate listening as a vital part in reading instruction.
3. place high values upon pupil's listening carefully in ongoing units of study in reading.
4. set high expectations for pupils becoming good listeners.
5. evaluate with pupils how much improvement in listening on the part of learners is taking place.

Involving Pupils in Curriculum Development

How can pupils be more actively engaged to encourage improved listening? The teacher should know as much as possible about the reading interests of pupils as possible. Thus, materials of reading instruction that are interesting to pupils must be found. Interest is a powerful factor in getting learner interests for reading a selection. This has been found to be true again and again. Determine individual reading interests and then locate reading materials that match these interests for pupils. The interests of learners propel the involved person to achieve and grow in reading.

Teacher/pupil planning may aid the latter to put forth more effort in becoming a good reader. Seemingly, when pupils are involved in selecting what is to be learned, they perceive increased need to put forth effort in learning to read. There are times when pupils should choose their very own reading materials, such as selecting a library book to read by the self during free time or during time for sustained silent reading (SSR). To segregate pupils entirely from setting goals in the reading curriculum makes for learners who lack motivation.

Teachers need to be careful in choosing learning opportunities for pupils in reading. The learning opportunities should harmonize with the goals of reading instruction being emphasized. Pupils differ from each other in readiness factors for reading. It behooves the teacher to plan for learners individually and in committees so that the reading needs of pupils are being met. Careful planning of learning opportunities makes it possible that no pupil will fall through the cracks and become a failure in learning to read.

The teacher needs to guide each pupil in becoming a good listener since the pupil should be assisted in

1. building background information to read diverse selections.

2. developing skills in word recognition.

3. increasing skills to be able to participate in group discussions.

4. showing courteous behavior which are among the qualities of a good listener.

5. asking questions of higher cognition during collaborative endeavors.

6. evaluating the quality of interaction during committee and large group instruction.

7. monitoring his/her own progress in reading achievement.

8. obtaining information with less repetition involved of repeated content in ongoing lessons and units of study.

9. improving comprehension when different purposes are involved such as critical and creative listening as well as in problem solving activities.

10. participating actively in parent/teacher conferences when presenting his/her portfolio as well as other appraisal approaches and procedures to parents.

There are numerous pupils who have become bettor listeners while working at various learning centers. The learning centers concept in instruction stresses pupils becoming increasingly independent when evidence warrants. Pupils do need to develop responsible behavior. Life itself demands that pupils continuously become more independent in school work as well as in life outside school. Why? Parents become older and eventually are not able to provide for their offspring. When parents die, the pupil of yesterday needs to become completely self-sufficient in the future. Pupils, when ready, must achieve habits of self reliance and lean upon the self while respecting others and the self in everyday endeavors. The following learning centers then may assist pupils to develop independent, responsible behavior:

1. a discussion center. Here, pupils may discuss a selected picture or story to encourage curiosity in listening and in reading. Listening can cut across all curriculum areas such as pupils discussing a current events item in the social studies, conducting a science experiment, and solving word problems collaboratively in mathematics.

2. an audio-visual center. Pupils cooperatively may discuss the contents of a CD ROM, a videotape, a film/filmstrip, study prints, contents in a single concept film, as well as ideas gleaned from a computer package.

3. a listening center. Pupils may then choose, from among others, cassette recordings to listen to. The content in the cassettes should relate to diverse units of study in the reading curriculum. Evaluation sheets may be available for pupils to appraise the self in listening comprehension.

4. oral reading and story telling center. Here pupils may listen to stories on tape or being told/read orally by pupils. Questions covering

the content may be answered by pupils to check comprehension. A bar or line graph may be developed by learners to evaluate if the quality of listening is improving.

The creative teacher tries out new ideas in helping pupils to improve in the listening arena. A pleasant speaking voice may encourage improved listening habits on the part of pupils. Establishing set for teaching might enable pupils to be better listeners. Listening is more than hearing. With good listening, there is comprehension of ideas. Reflection of ideas presented is vital. When reflecting, the chances are pupils will come up with higher levels of cognition such as applying what has been understood, analyzing ideas gleaned in terms of relevancy versus those possessing less relevancy, coming up with unique, novel ideas as a result of listening, and appraising content listened to. Modeling good listening habits is vital. Both the teacher and pupils should serve as models so that a quality listening environment is in evidence. If the teacher, for example, is a good listener, the chances are this will have its effects and influence upon children in the classroom.

Conclusion

Listening is the very first vocabulary developed by the infant, starting at birth. The listening vocabulary provides the basis for developing the second vocabulary which is speaking. The child needs to hear words so that he/she may say the words, initially in imitation form. Parents might well serve as good models for pupils to emulate in listening as well as in speaking. The third vocabulary to be developed is the reading vocabulary. Thus, listening and speaking provide foundational learning experiences for pupils in reading. The last of the four vocabularies to be developed is the writing vocabulary. Pupils do much reading when they engage in writing such as in proofing the related subject matter produced. Thus, there are numerous opportunities for pupils practicing reading when engaging in writing.

Many of the listening activities discussed above also have the speaking component. It seems as if listening and speaking are one, not separate entities. A caring teacher guides pupils to increase listening skills so that background information and knowledge of the reading act can be strengthened due to definite goals stressed in listening.

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